Chinese migrant wives in Taiwan

Chinese Migrant Wives in Taiwan: Claiming Entitlements, Resisting Inequality, and Rejecting Citizenship

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Abstract

A considerable number of Chinese women have migrated to Taiwan through marriage over the last two decades. Although the demographics of these marriage migrants have transformed throughout the years, a misunderstanding still exists as migrant wives are seen as commodities and gaining citizen status is seen as their ultimate goal. Using in-depth interviews, this research takes a bottom-up approach by allowing Chinese migrant women in Taiwan to define and interpret their own citizenship. It explains how they negotiate the politics of citizenship as they confront harsher immigration restrictions than immigrants of other origins because of their Chinese identity. This paper suggests that immigrants' intersectional identities shape their conceptualization of Taiwanese citizenship, although their agency is limited. My findings illustrate that some Chinese migrant wives embrace citizenship entitlements while others' experiences with citizenship differ depending on their positionality in both the private and the public. My findings also show that some migrant wives actively reject Taiwanese citizenship, challenging the myth that all Chinese immigrants desire Taiwanese citizenship. This study contributes to citizenship and migration studies using a feminist, intersectional approach and raises implications for the degree to which migrant wives have agency in constructing their citizenship.

Keywords: migration, citizenship, marriage intersectionality, Taiwan, China

Introduction

Since Marshall (1950) argued that rights are integral to citizenship, numerous studies have centered on the legal and rights dimensions of citizenship, often assuming that immigrants covet citizenship (e.g. Baubock 2006; Joppke 2001) . As marriage migration is the principal path to acquiring citizenship for Chinese immigrants to Taiwan, movement across the Taiwan Strait is highly gendered. While heterosexual men's role in nation-building is mostly examined, women's vision of citizenship is, however, ignored. Moreover, theorizations of citizenship rarely consider the intersections of marriage migrants'[1] multiple identities in shaping their construction of and agency in defining their citizenship. Therefore, this paper explores these questions: (1) how do Chinese migrant wives conceptualize Taiwanese citizenship? and (2) how do their intersectional identities influence their conceptualization, as well as their agency to define citizenship? My open-ended, in-depth interviews with 24 Chinese migrant women in Taiwan provide insight into the complex conceptualization of Taiwanese citizenship among Chinese migrant women.

After a brief exposition of the differentiated paths to citizenship for Chinese and other immigrants and its construction of a second-class citizenship status for Chinese migrants generally, I examine Chinese women' conceptualization of Taiwanese citizenship. This paper makes three main contributions. First, by drawing from the concept of a "multi-layered citizen" (Yuval-Davis 1999), I argue that citizenship should not only be understood in its legal aspect but also through the lived experiences of migrants. Such an approach enhances the feminist understanding of citizenship.

[1] Ninety-three percent of cross-strait marriages are between Taiwanese man and a Chinese women whereas only 7% are between a Chinese man and a Taiwanese woman (Ministry of the Interior of Taiwan 2017). Thus, this article approaches the conceptualization of citizenship from the migrant wives' perspective.

Through comprehending how Chinese migrant wives vary in materializing Taiwanese citizenship, this research reveals that citizenship is not monolithic. Instead, immigrants' entitlements to rights, protection, and benefits are differentiated through the unequal treatment due to their country of origin. Moreover, immigrants' refusal to naturalize exhibits a rejection of the presumably valued entitlements of Taiwanese citizenship. In comprehending what citizenship means to migrants, this article seeks to start a conversation on the possibilities of on rejecting the binary constructs of juridical citizen status and such rejection will benefit from feminists' insights on Asian politics in a globalized era where thousands of women partake in marriage migration across the Taiwan Strait yearly.

Second, prior literature centers on native Taiwanese citizens' views of Chinese immigrants, instead of how immigrants view themselves and the nation-state (e.g. Tsay 2004). Even when scholars consider the opinion of Chinese immigrants, they employ national surveys to analyze their living conditions and social integration (e.g. Chang and Liao 2015; Yeh 2010). Little research investigates what Taiwanese citizenship means to Chinese immigrants. My methodology—open-ended, in-depth interviews—allows Chinese women to have a voice. Using grounded theory to code and analyze the interviews, my participants are the agents in defining their own status and in explaining their own ideas about citizenship. My data also provides empirical evidence for feminist citizenship studies.

Third, departing from the assumptions that migrant wives are victims yearning for citizenship, this research demonstrates that not all Chinese women are socioeconomically vulnerable and desire Taiwanese citizenship. In addition to bringing gender into migration as feminist scholars have previously done (Erel et al. 2003; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Donato et al. 2006), an intersectional approach helps link marriage migrants' identities and their construction of citizenship. Although immigrants of all origins experience oppressions, this intersectional approach is critical because

much diversity exists within this group of immigrants in Taiwan. The pathways for Chinese women to migrate to Taiwan for marriage has diversified, which is largely manifested by migrant women's education, skill-level, and class, whereas match-making agencies are still the norm for other migrant women of Southeast Asia (Lu 2005). Hence, my analysis centers on migrants' various identities and shows that migrant wives' agency, although restricted, produces a space and freedom. My findings echo Ong et al.'s (1996) arguments that positionality matters—migrant wives' intersectional identities dictate their agency in visualizing and utilizing citizenship even when their agency is limited by their roles and responsibilities as wives. Taking a feminist approach allows this study to rely on migrant women themselves to provide insights into how intersectionality plays a role in the variation of Chinese migrant women's conceptualizations of Taiwanese citizenship.

Cross-Strait Marriage Migration Phenomenon and Its Implications

Cross-strait marriage migration is a political, legal, economic, gendered, and intersectional phenomenon. In this section, I contextualize the need to turn to migrants themselves to understand the meaning of citizenship in cross-strait marriage migration by revealing the complex ambiguities of citizenship created by these dynamics.

Political context

Taiwan receives marriage migrants of different origins. Yet, cross-strait marriages constitute the largest among international marriages since the 1990s. At its peak in 2003, approximately 20% of total marriages were between a Taiwanese citizen and a Chinese spouse. While all marriage migrants experience oppressions, Chinese women's situation is unique given the complex cross-strait relationships. On the one hand, Chinese immigrants and native Taiwanese citizens share similar

language and customs, making their immigrant status less visible. On the other hand, Chinese immigrants' paths to Taiwanese citizenship are tainted. The notion of multiple identities and loyalties of immigrants are traditionally seen as contradictory to state sovereignty (Hsia 2009). Because of China's suppression of Taiwan internationally and Taiwan's *sui generis* character, Chinese immigrants are especially seen as a potential threat to Taiwan's national integrity (Chen 2012). Consequently, Taiwan, also known as the Republic of China, has practiced parallel marital immigration policies as a way to distinguish itself from People's Republic of China and to exert its sovereignty. That is, Taiwan uses marital migration governance as a tool for asserting its internationally challenged sovereignty. As migration policies define the notions of sovereignty, nationality, citizenship, and border, it is thus especially significant to pay attention to how migration legislations differ for Chinese immigrants from other groups of immigrants in Taiwan. Harsher citizenship acquisition policies for Chinese immigrants are a result of this fear and function as a mechanism for the regime to exert its sovereignty. Particularly because misconception about Chinese immigrants' desire to become Taiwanese citizens persists[2], how Chinese migrant wives' conceptualize citizenship provides

[2] For example, on March 18, 2014, a coalition of students and civic groups began the Sunflower Movement during which they occupied the Taiwan Legislative Yuan for 24 days. The discourse quickly transformed from raising awareness on Kuomintang's undemocratic passage of the Cross-Straight Service Trade Agreement into promoting an anti-China sentiment. The latter discourse illustrates the concerns about the increasing presence of Chinese immigrants (Ho 2015). What the native citizens consider alarming is naturalized immigrants' impact on Taiwan's domestic politics and national identity through their participation in elections and support of political parties and candidates that favor unification (Zhong 2016). This anxiety indicates a trajectory of belief regarding Chinese immigrants' desire for Taiwanese citizenship.

an excellent opening for exploring the multiple dimensions of citizenship from a feminist perspective in cases where immigrants experience graduated citizenship by which some of their citizen rights are deprived (Friedman 2010).

The restrictions generated by marital immigration policies are not identical for all immigrants in Taiwan. Chinese immigrants abide to the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, which stipulates that Chinese marriage migrants could only gain citizenship through acquisition whereas immigrants of other nationalities can naturalize under the naturalization laws. Citizenship requirements are differentiated and more onerous for Chinese immigrants in two respects: inequalities before and after acquiring Taiwanese citizenship. It was not until 2009[3] when all immigrants could apply for residency, allowing them access to healthcare and employment. Now Chinese migrants' legal status is first granted by residency when attaining the right to entry then by long-term residency, both of which occur prior to naturalization. However, Chinese immigrants must wait two more years to acquire citizenship than other foreign nationals seeking naturalization. Additionally, Chinese immigrants' educational degrees from Chinese institutions remain unrecognized until they acquire Taiwanese citizenship. This policy suggests that Chinese immigrants must apply to be citizens if they wish to be recognized for their educational achievements.

After acquiring Taiwanese citizenship, Chinese immigrants still face inequalities regarding eligibility for civil service. Although immigrants of other nationalities are also barred from a range of public offices, more restrictions are in place for Chinese immigrants. For example, for the first ten years after gaining Taiwanese citizenship, Chinese immigrants are prohibited from standing for

[3] Prior to 2009, Chinese immigrants must wait two years to apply for residency before they could be legally employed.

elections, establishing political parties, and working in state-funded/state-owned education institutions and enterprises.

Gendered Citizenship Frameworks

Citizenship has traditionally been understood as how legal membership and entitlements mark the boundaries between who is legitimatized. Nonetheless, the framework of juridical citizenship does not sufficiently apply to marriage migrants' citizenship because juridical citizenship is highly masculine, androcentric, and reflective of elite male experiences and perspectives (Peterson 1999). Marriage migrants' citizenship is not gender neutral as their experiences are confined by their relationships with the family and the state (Lister 2003; Munday 2009). For instance, women's socioeconomic mobility depends on the protection and recognition of citizen status since women experience higher risks, such as violence, in the migration process (Silvey 2004). Commercially arranged marriages also imperil women. Migrant women are at a higher risk for violence and receive limited protection and support (Davin 2007; Yang and Lu 2010). Moreover, as migrant wives are seen as inferior and assumed to migrate for money, they can be subjected to psychological violence by the nation-state when interviewing for entry or settlement permits (Friedman 2010).

Beyond juridical citizenship, citizenship offers a substantive sense of belonging to a community (Kaufman and Williams 2004). Cultural citizenship is bound by common identities although not by legal status, it (Nyamu-Musembi 2007). As immigrants sit on the bottom of hierarchy in substantive citizenship, their citizenship becomes partial (Ong 2006). Much of this belonging connects to women's reproductive ability (Parrenas 2001; Cheng 2003). Particularly because many Chinese migrant women migrate for marriage, not only are they responsible for

biological reproduction and childbearing while the quality of their offspring is questioned, but they are also responsible for social reproduction. They are expected to help sustain the lives and relationships of family members via their domestic labor and care (Kim 2013). They are also the symbolic makers of the nation as they bear the responsibility of maintaining purity and constructing nationalism (Kaufman and Williams 2007; Mostov and Mayer 2000).

Additionally, some marriage migrants may exercise citizenship as an instrumental tool, valuing for the hypermobility that comes with the benefits of citizenship (Skeldon 1995). In this case, they have no intention for long-term settlement or sense of loyalty to their host country. Instead, they care about the benefits, such as economic freedom, of flexible citizenship (Ong 1999). In contrast to instrumental[4] citizenship, immigrants may also emphasize the insurgent notion of citizenship to confront the regime and demand right to space and justice (Holston 2009). Some may also accentuate the pragmatic aspect of citizenship by which they can participate in politics. Because of the gendered experiences with citizenship, multiple meanings of citizenship should be considered using an intersectionality to generate valuable insight into migrant experiences.

Intersectional dimensions of gender

Not only is citizenship gendered, but it is also differentiated along other dimensions of identity (Yuval-Davis 1991). Migrant Chinese women's intersectional identities, specifically class,

[4] Instrumental citizenship captures the flexibility that immigrants receive when evaluating the monetary benefits, but immigrants may also reject citizenship based on instrumental reasons. Pragmatic citizenship focuses on the voting rights that immigrants receive, which as my findings illustrate, is not how some Chinese migrant women view Taiwanese citizenship.

education, and origin, help construct the power structure that creates inequalities that shape people's lives, leading to their conceptualization and pursuit of Taiwanese citizenship in three ways. First, Taiwan has suffered from a bride deficit; the high demand to seek wives abroad has fostered commercialized agencies and informal social networks to ease the searches (Lu 2005; Berlanger 2010). Women receive a fee[5] through commercial arrangements. While the fee helps attract socioeconomically disadvantaged women, it may also further marginalize their already vulnerable position because the monetary exchange puts them at an inferior place (Linquist et al. 2004). For instance, it is not unusual for Taiwanese husbands to mistreat or abuse their wives because migrant women may be considered property when they men pay a fee to marry them. Their inferior status due to commodification of their body and marriage suggests their needs of protection and care from the government, which can be most directly achieved via citizenship acquisition. Consequently, socioeconomically disadvantaged women seek citizenship which they associate with the right to work and with concrete welfare benefits and services.

Second, the economic and political relations between Taiwan and China have transformed drastically in the last decade, diversifying the platforms through which Chinese women meet Taiwanese men. Nowadays, Chinese women may meet Taiwanese professionals traveling to China

[5] Cross-strait marriages arranged by commercialized agencies or certified not-for-profit operations involve a fee. The fee can be fixed, charged by match-making operations to cover the costs for database of Chinese women, flight, accommodation, banquet, documentation, etc. The wife-to-be receives the remaining fee after deducting the cost of operation. Alternatively, the fee and wedding expenses can also be negotiated between the wife-to-be and Taiwanese men. In addition to the fees, women can also negotiate the bride price—from a groom to the parents of the bride-to-be—which is a custom in Taiwan.

for work. Unlike women whose marriages are commercially arranged, women who meet men through work functions are often highly educated and skilled (Wang and Chang 2002; Friedman 2016). These women may desire more than legal rights and welfare as economic betterment may not be their motivation. Yet equal treatment is not feasible due to their Chinese status, resulting in their differentiated citizenship (Le et al. 2014). Thus, the intersectional identities differentiate Chinese women's experiences from those of other immigrants. For instance, before acquiring Taiwanese citizenship, Chinese women's university or post-graduate degrees are unrecognized by Taiwan whereas degrees from other countries are, forcing them to hold feminized occupations. While working-class Chinese women tend to benefit from pink-collar jobs by which they gain financial independence, educated women may feel frustrated because their qualifications are futile in Taiwan. As Taiwanese citizenship does not grant Chinese women the same rights, opportunities, and accesses as immigrants of other origins, educated Chinese women's Taiwanese citizenship is especially differentiated, leading to their partial agency.

Third, I contend that these identities, especially class, affect whether they acquire Taiwanese citizenship. Wealthy immigrants may consider which citizen status is the most beneficial. Strategic thinking is common when immigrants navigate citizenship (Ong 1996). Accordingly, Chinese women who have fewer financial worries and needs for government welfare are less motivated to pursue Taiwanese citizenship. If the cost of changing citizen status outweighed its practical benefits, marriage migrants may make tactical choices to reject Taiwanese citizenship. While such rejection grants marriage migrants the flexibility in defining their belonging, I also contend that Chinese women's agency to reject is largely influenced by their husbands. Taiwanese men who marry Chinese women may have plans for their careers or retirement in China; thus, they may be instrumental in persuading their wives to maintain Chinese citizenship or attain Taiwanese citizenship.

Data and Methodology

In light of the dynamics of political, economic, social, gendered, and intersectional forces affecting how migrants might consider Taiwanese citizenship, this study turns to the migrants themselves to provide insights into how Chinese migrant women vary in their conceptualization of Taiwanese citizenship. To do so, I interviewed 24 Chinese women who migrated to Taiwan through marriage. Although my sample size is not large, it is rich in content and diversity. The women I interviewed endured different experiences due to their differences in age, generation, class, education, employment, and citizen status. Their experiences were also distinct due to their surroundings. Most interviews lasted between one to ten hours, during which I was invited to observe their daily activities. The long durations and sometimes repeated interactions helped us to familiarize ourselves with each other, enabling the immigrants to more openly share their thoughts. These interviews also took place at locations of migrant women's choices, including their offices, homes, and coffee shops, between May 13, 2015 and June 1, 2015.

Participants were recruited through existing social networks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and were informed that they would be identified with pseudonyms so they could speak freely. The informal, open-ended in-depth interviews allowed participants to share their substantial experience, define issues in their own terms, and interpret the meaning of their circumstances. In-depth interviewing also enabled participants to comment as experts in their own experiences through the stories they shared (Hoffmann 2007). Rarely do scholars take a bottom-up approach to dissecting migrant wives' voice and agency (Kojima 2001; Turner 2008). However, this methodology has been important for feminist international relations scholars (e.g. Ackerly 2001; Stern 2005; Baaz and Stern 2013) in understanding how concepts are understood by those in struggle. Due to the complexity of forces and the simplicity of dominant narratives about Chinese

migrant women, incorporating migrant women's narratives is pivotal in understanding how they produce meaning, communicate purpose, and legitimize actions.

While appreciative of the insights made possible by previous theorizations of migration as a political, economic, social, gendered, or intersectional phenomenon, seeking to understand how these forces intersect and recognizing that there are likely other forces of which I am unaware, I use grounded theory to analyze my interviews. Grounded theory, an inductive methodology, prevents me from preconception and gives me flexibility in understanding my data (Charmaz and Belgrave 2007). While appreciative of the insights made possible by those who theorize about migration as a political, economic, social, gendered, or intersectional phenomenon, seeking to understand how these forces intersect and recognizing that there are likely other forces of which I am unaware, I used grounded theory to analyze my interviews. I visit and revisit the ideas and the structure of the ideas revealed in the interviews. The methods enable both the conceptualizations and the findings regarding those conceptualizations to be found in the data. Not only does this methodology help me gain knowledge and identify a pattern on the shared construction citizenship among migrant wives, but it also allows the data—migrant women's narratives—to speak for itself and to reflect the real challenges Chinese women face (Strauss and Corbin 1997).

I performed three rounds of coding. In each phase, I took notes. In the first round, I read my transcriptions several times and created codes for almost every part of the text based on the content of the data. In the second round, I looked through the various labels that I created and identified patterns across these labels. In the last round, I reread the transcripts and recoded the texts that were linked to previously identified codes. In this stage, I found connections between my codes and theoretical patterns. As Holton (2010) notes, through these three rounds of coding, I developed the conceptual abstraction of data and the theory of migrant views of citizenship. The

emergence of patterns during this process also enables tracing and analyzing the role of participants' identities in their rhetoric and experiences.

Analysis of the Immigrant Perspective

My analysis shows an emerging pattern in which Chinese migrant women define citizenship in three categories— entitlement, differentiated, and rejected.. The women I interviewed accept Taiwanese citizenship as a path to legal rights and entitlements. Some also resist differentiated citizenship. Some also reject Taiwanese citizenship for instrumental reasons. Their intersectional identities are a part of their conceptualization of Taiwanese citizenship.

Accepting citizenship as the path to legal rights and entitlements

While Taiwanese citizenship is not the only means by which migrants gain the legal status to stay many Chinese women become Taiwanese citizens associate citizenship with the legal and economic benefits by emphasizing the legal permission for them to engage in a variety of activities, such as employment.[6] However, as I show below employment is not the only aspect of autonomy facilitated by citizenship.

Eighty-eight percent of the migrant women in my sample are employed. Many of them work long hours every day, holding positions that require low skills. The majority of those who expressed their satisfaction with the concrete benefits of Taiwanese citizenship were those that came to Taiwan via brokers. They started working as soon as they could legally to avoid relying on their husbands.

[6] Government employment is another matter, which I discuss in the next section.

Unemployed migrant wives are forced to be dependent on their husbands, making them isolated and insecure. Citizenship, however, gives them an opportunity to establish networks and gain financial independence. Financial independence enables them the agency to improve their socioeconomic status. Working Chinese women have an easier time adjusting and gaining independence in other aspects of their lives besides finance. Extant surveys report that Chinese spouses' families were better gender equalized than Southeast Asian and European and North American spouses (Yeh 2010). Although this finding could be attributed to Chinese women's lack of need to learn Mandarin before diving into employment, Chinese women's legal entitlement to workforce participation contributes to their independence and fewer household chores. Hence, opportunities for labor participation granted by citizenship perhaps is more accessible to Chinese women than to those of other origins without the proficiency in Mandarin.

However, because of women's potential for personal independence through economic independence, labor force participation granted by the identification card can bring fear to Taiwanese husbands, which is apparent in my interview with Mei, a 52-year-old masseuse, who has lived in Taiwan for 18 years. We met at a coffee shop near her massage parlor on a Saturday morning prior to work. We talked for an hour before she left for her first appointment. We also met and conversed two additional times; however, she was always busy attending to her clients. Mei works from 9am to 9pm; Sunday is her only day off. She said:

> When I first got married and moved here, all I did was take care of my mother-in-law. She was very sick. I gave her massages to alleviate her pain. I was bored besides tending to her needs. She encouraged me to get a masseuse license. I took training lessons, got my license, and started working. My husband initially did not support my work outside the home… I had to convince him… Now that I have been working

> for many years, he knows what this job entails and realizes that I wouldn't leave him just because I have outside contact or an income.[7]

As Mei's husband's concern exemplifies, work can be considered a gateway to bad influence. Financial independence may cause husbands to question their wives' love and loyalty. Migrant women's employment challenges the dominant dichotomy of a husband's and a wife's position and threatens the patriarchal relations in the family. Moreover, activities in the public sphere are seen to prevent migrant wives from maintaining their purity and innocence and fulfilling their duties as loyal wives and good mothers. Stories about migrant women leaving their husbands immediately upon employment are reiterated in the media (Hsia 2007). While citizen status empowers women, migrant wives are still confined by what is socially accepted and more importantly, what is accepted by their husbands. While naturalized migrant wives have the agency to work, their independence is not necessarily welcome by their husbands. Such disapproval of employment outside the home, consequently, confines their agency.

Migrants perceive that citizenship grants more dimensions of autonomy than merely those facilitated by employment. For example, Hsia, who is 53 years old and has lived in Taiwan for 16 years indicated:

> I became a Taiwanese citizen so I could engage in a number of activities that are only accessible for citizens, such as a driver's license. If I could drive a car or ride a motorbike, it makes grocery shopping a lot easier. I no longer have to depend on anyone for taking me places.[8]

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[7] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 17 May, 2015.

[8] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 19 May, 2015.

Because Hsia lives in a rural area with fewer employment opportunities, her ability to get to the school where she works as a kitchen staff is crucial. Although her understanding of benefits and services provided for non-citizens is incorrect—citizenship is not required for a driver's license—her perception of citizenship benefits illustrates her priorities on the practical advantages of citizenship over other potentially equally significant indicators, such as belonging and loyalty to a nation. As marriage migration is gendered—migrant women enter through the family-related route and automatically become the dependents of their husbands—citizenship rights help migrant women to gain income and mobility, expand their networks, and climb the socioeconomic ladder.

Besides the independence granted by official documents, citizenship has other legal benefits. Chu is a 56-year-old butcher who works alongside her husband at traditional markets. For 20 years every morning, Chu has gotten up early to prepare for her business at a morning market and has worked until the evening market closes without a break during the day. Not only does Chu fulfill the role of a good wife who supports and helps her husband's business, but she does so by—integrating herself in a highly masculine work place. In our conversations, she confessed her regret for marrying a man who has physically and emotionally abused her. However, Chu manages to see a positive benefit—healthcare— of being a Taiwanese citizen. While she is reluctant to seek shelter to escape from domestic violence, she acknowledges that her access to healthcare has alleviated her domestic situation. Not only can she see a doctor without worrying about the medical bills, but the healthcare she receives allows her to retrieve her economic independence. Therefore, in addition to the employment opportunities accompanied by citizenship, healthcare is also a way from which migrant women could benefit in order to have some leverage from any sort of challenge they may face in their private homes. Chu is not alone in asserting that healthcare is a major benefit of Taiwanese citizenship. Their gratitude toward government support is connected with its practical benefits and

services. Nevertheless, for a working immigrant like Chu who is positioned on the bottom of the hierarchy, the practical benefits of Taiwanese citizenship become particularly vital.

As demonstrated, entitlements are always the first direct benefit that working migrant women associate with citizenship. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Chinese migrants can work legally once they acquire residency status in Taiwan and become eligible for national health insurance within a few months of arrival. What is significant is that Chinese migrant wives perceive and prioritize these opportunities and benefits as a crucial citizen entitlement. The benefit of being legally employed and entitled to universal healthcare makes Taiwanese citizenship palpable and worth acquiring. This misunderstanding of requirements for rights demonstrates how migrants see citizenship as functional. Through the ability to work, drive a car, and receive universal healthcare, Chinese migrant wives' citizenship is defined. These working women's citizenship is related to their basic survival—wages, mobility, and financial independence. Moreover, Chinese migrant wives' identities, particularly, class, dictate their perception and pursuit of citizenship.

Resisting citizenship without equality

Although all citizens share in the legal entitlements above, Chinese migrant women's citizenship does not result in the equal legal treatment of Chinese and immigrants of other nationalities, making their citizenship differentiated. In this section, I describe citizenship without equality. The government's stricter policies for Chinese immigrants mean citizenship is differentiated by country of origin. While Chinese migrants gain entitlement benefits with citizenship, their citizenship is not equal in how it is experienced by native and naturalized citizens. Because of Taiwan's eagerness to assert its sovereignty by recognizing only one Republic of China, Taiwan has barred Chinese immigrants from participating in politics or holding public office positions within

the first ten years of citizenship acquisition. Their degrees from Chinese universities are not recognized, forcing them to take lower-level jobs. Therefore, the effect of differentiated citizenship (Young 2011) may seem stronger and more often endured by Chinese women with a higher educational degree and a higher skill. Their unusual identity as highly educated/skilled migrant women, as most migrant women in Asia fall in the category of less-skilled sectors (Oishi 2002), also leaves them in a dilemma. On the one hand, they have career ambitions and goals that they cannot pursue. On the other hand, they are not willing to compromise their skill-set to hold low-skill jobs.

Yun, 38 years old, having lived in Taiwan for eight years and established herself in the political arena, works at a small political party that aims to increase the representation of Chinese immigrants. Nevertheless, the party primarily functions as a site for interested individuals to seek connections with other Chinese immigrants. Yun said:

> I was already 30 years old when I moved here. It took me eight years to get my citizenship. If I had to wait another ten years to get a job in the government, I would be 48 years old already. How would I have the energy to study and prepare for public service exams? People retire at that age. My Chinese identity has limited me. My citizenship allows me to work but only in certain sectors.[9]

Other women that I have met through NGOs and volunteer-sites are like Yun; they all hold university degrees and had professional jobs while in China. Although their move is recent, they have quickly found their own social network through these organizations. Yun, Hong, and Hua worked at different organizations and did not know one another but all became involved with their work at the NGOs because they realized that their degrees in China were not recognized. Yun, for example, holds a master's degree and conducts research for this political party; before moving, she

[9] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 29 May, 2015.

worked at a Fortune 500 company. These highly educated/skilled women are forced to hold low-skilled occupations or volunteer at NGOs because their credentials are not officially recognized until citizenship acquisition. They are also confronted with an additional dilemma about whether to acquire Taiwanese citizenship so they could engage in white-collar professions. Echoing Kofman (2006), the inclusion of skilled labor of migrant wives offers a counter narrative in understanding their [unrecognized] contribution in Taiwan.

Another example is 32-year-old Hong who works as an insurance agent and as an assistant at an NGO. Hong also has a master's degree and worked as a manager at a prestigious textile company while in China. She emphasized that she did not sell life insurance as a preference. Working as an insurance agent is common for Chinese immigrants with university degrees because of its low barrier to enter and because of their access to potential Chinese clients within their own networks. Many educated Chinese migrant women do not work in sectors that require low-skills, such as restaurants or beauty salons, because they do not find those occupations fitting for their background. While their qualifications are not officially recognized and almost prohibited from high skill professions, selling insurance is a compromise they make.

The experience of unequal citizenship may also be class-based. While many working-class women are content with their pink-collar occupations and financial independence, highly-educated/skilled women feel penalized. Educated/skilled Chinese women express that they do not feel like they fit in with other Chinese women working in restaurants or beauty salons. Several of them even choose not to work because they do not want to be in an environment where only their physical labor is compensated. The limited variety of professions available for them reflects the legal discriminations of Chinese degrees not being recognized and leads to a sense of social betrayal and exclusion. While they think it is an injustice that their credentials are not accepted as a result of the political dilemma between China and Taiwan's unresolved civil war status, this differentiated

citizenship is especially gendered because highly educated/skilled migrant husbands tend to stay and advance their careers in China as their Taiwanese wives follow them.[10] Hence, theoretically, differentiated citizenship applies to all Chinese immigrants; realistically, highly educated/skilled migrant wives are more likely to be affected than migrant husbands.

Moreover, although working-class migrant wives are the most vulnerable, they also tend to not have strong reactions toward these discriminatory policies. Working-class women are naturally less affected by prohibition of public office seats as these options are not within their realm for reasons of skill and education. Contrary to Yun's discontent with the immigration policies, several working-class Chinese migrant wives expressed that it is understandable that Chinese immigrants are treated differently from other immigrants. Ming, 47 years old migrant who has worked in Taiwan for 19 years as a domestic helper asserted:

> If you are negative about it, you could say that these policies are discriminatory. But if you look at it more positively, it is just a product of the political structure. Political structures exist for a reason.[11]

Ming consistently expressed positive thinking throughout our conversations. When I applauded her for her positive energy, she simply replied:

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[10] While increasingly more Taiwanese women are marrying Chinese men, it is still likely that Taiwanese women reside in China with their Chinese spouses, suggesting the gendered aspect of the differentiated citizenship although it also applies to men.

[11] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 17 May, 2015.

> Many Chinese wives live difficult lives. We[12] often complain when we get together, but I try to maintain positive thinking. Although I sense Taiwanese' discriminatory looks, I try not to think too much about it.[13]

Min's response suggests that she is well-aware of country-of-origin-based discrimination nd that it is part of Taiwan-China politics. While her outlook on life seems positive, her acceptance seems descriptively defeatist. Her response also suggests that migrant wives remaining positive and understanding of the differential treatments as a result of national policies is one mechanism by which they may also exercise their limited agency. Fifty-five-year-old Xing, another woman who has lived in Taiwan for 28 years and still tries hard to adjust her accent expressed similar thoughts:

> I don't think it's unfair that Taiwan prohibits dual citizenship for Chinese immigrants. Immigrants in China also experience discrimination. You're on someone else's land. It's normal that they have policies tailored toward individuals of specific countries.[14]

Agency is restricted for migrant wives with varying educational and socioeconomic backgrounds; and yet, they utilize their agency differently according to their circumstances. As Taiwanese citizenship represents multifaceted advantages and disadvantages, Chinese women of different socioeconomic backgrounds cope with unequal treatments differently. The only agency of

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[12] Ming has developed with other migrant wives via government-sponsored workshops and programs. Conversely, most migrant husbands in Taiwan, are less likely to develop a social circle because these programs are specifically tailored for migrant wives, leaving an insufficient community for migrant husbands.

[13] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 17 May, 2015.

[14] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 15 May, 2015.

working-class Chinese women who migrated to Taiwan through brokers is that which they gain through legal entitlement. While internalizing and accepting the situation seems to work well for working-class migrant wives to exercise their individual agency, such agency is a temporary solution within a larger framework that lacks structural agency.

On the contrary, those with higher education degrees manifest agency by working towards changing the situation. The wealthier and more educated women cope with the political challenges by actively involving in organizations that serve Chinese migrant wives. In addition to their frustration regarding their unrecognized qualifications, they volunteer at a wide range of organizations that not only advocate for Chinese migrants' rights but also offer help to those in need. In several instances when I was interviewing these women at their offices, women who were undergoing divorces came for their advice. They volunteered their time to set up appointments for these women to seek legal advice. Additionally, these highly educated and highly-skilled women have also participated in street protests and demand for equal legislations. They have mobilized voters to support and donated money to pro-equality political parties and candidates. Not only did they all mention that they strive for the equal legal treatment of Chinese and immigrants of other nationalities, but their agency is apparent when taking concrete actions toward equality.

Rejecting Citizenship

The Chinese women discussed above value the entitlement benefits of citizenship and take political and social action against the inequality, in comparison to native Taiwanese citizens, as well as naturalized citizens of other country of origin, in their citizenship enjoyment. By contrast, younger and wealthier Chinese immigrant women are less inclined toward Taiwanese citizenship. However, they are not rejecting citizenship for the reasons that the elite women above are resisting

unequal citizenship within Taiwan. Rather, they are rejecting Taiwanese citizenship because of the opportunities in China that it will foreclose. For the most part, these Chinese migrant women are younger and met their Taiwanese husbands when they traveled to China for business.

For example, 30-year-old Wen met her husband during his business trip to China and has been in Taiwan for five years. She said:

> I don't want to naturalize. My husband has plans to go to China for work in two years. It will be easier if I were still a Chinese citizen... I don't want to work here. I have plans to return to China one day… If anything, Taiwanese citizenship only creates trouble for me. If I had Taiwanese citizenship, I would have to give up my Chinese citizenship. It'll make going back more difficult. I can still buy properties in China now. I have been thinking about buying a house there because my family is there. It's more difficult for Taiwanese citizens to own properties there.[15]

Wen's response illustrates her view of citizenship as flexible and connected to her desired geographic and financial flexibility. Her wealthy status becomes apparent immediately after we met. She drove to our meeting in her luxurious car and explained that her husband owns a real estate and construction business nearby so she was planning on meeting him at his office afterwards. She reassured me that it was no trouble for her to travel far since she spends time with her friends, getting tea, or shopping on most days.

Wen's lifestyle does not resonate most other Chinese migrant wives I have met of any age. Nonetheless, Wen is not alone in shattering the myth of poor migrant wives' motivation for Taiwanese citizenship. Several other women also declared that they did not want to acquire Taiwanese citizenship, but they were only going through the process because their husbands wanted

[15] Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 21 May, 2015.

them to. Very much like Wen, Huang, a 29-year-old woman who holds a bachelor's degree in business administration, spends her day jogging and following the stock market. Huang met her husband at work and has lived in Taiwan for three years. Her Taiwanese husband still works and lives in China while she lives alone in Taiwan. She confessed:

> I don't want to naturalize. My husband wants to retire in Taiwan eventually and wants me and our future children to stay here. That's why I am here—alone—fulfilling the time requirement. Otherwise, I don't think [Taiwanese citizenship] makes a difference.[16]

Compared to Chinese women who work, Wen and Huang express no interest in Taiwanese citizenship. Their ability to move and choose where they live grants them mobility and freedom whereas as others need citizenship and its accompanied resources to be mobile. Class does not only shape Chinese immigrants' motivation and path to migrate, but it also intersects with their identities, specifically gender, age, and nationality, in determining their power to retain close ties with China. Wen's and Huang's access to economic capital leads to their relatively greater access to choices in life, demonstrating that class should not be neglected when studying migration as class determines the capacity for immigrants' mobility (van Hear 2014).

Young wealthy Chinese women's rejection of citizenship undermines the stereotypes that Taiwanese citizens impose upon them. Previous studies, particularly those on flexible citizenship (Ong 1999), explore immigrants' choice of citizenship based on their perceptions of the economic consequences of citizenship. While some of the migrant women I spoke to have chosen to reject Taiwanese citizenship for long-term economic reasons instead of membership of political rights, not all of them did. Therefore, "rejected citizenship" more accurately explains their refusals to acquire

[16]Interview with author, Taipei, Taiwan, 28 May, 2015.

Taiwanese citizenship because not all rejections are economically-driven, which is the core of flexible citizenship. My findings on rejected citizenship also move the understanding of citizenship away from flexible citizenship and adds additional possible dimensions of citizenship. For these women, the resources guaranteed by Chinese citizenship outweigh the advantages granted by Taiwanese citizenship. At the same time, migrant wives who have the economic means to reject citizenship are often constrained by their husbands' wishes. Huang's pursuing Taiwanese citizenship despite not wanting it illustrates that her agency is partial. Similarly, Wen rejects Taiwanese citizenship in part because of her husband's vision for the future. On the surface, they both have much freedom, especially regarding their finances. Nonetheless, the degree to which they are truly able to make a decision seems limited as their autonomy to reject Taiwanese citizenship seems to be heavily impacted and constrained by their husbands. While Wen's and Huang's capital enables their individual agency, their experiences are still largely gendered as both indicate that they are obligated to reproduce. Wen and Huang both expressed that they were under tremendous pressure to get pregnant to carry on their husbands' bloodline. Again, migrant wives' role can easily be reduced to that of a reproducer. Their expected reproduction results from women's expected nature of caring and confirms their position in the gender care chain. Consequently, migrant wives' reproductive responsibilities can be used and manipulated strategically by their husbands' choices. While Wen and her husband agree that she remain a Chinese national, they think strategically in the long-term benefits for their future family. Conversely, Huang's husband wants her wife and future children to be Taiwanese, preventing them to return to China in the future. As feminist scholarship has established, the feminine act of migrant wives' reproduction marks the boundary of a nation, becomes a part of the negotiation, as well as reproduction of Taiwanese citizenship.

Conclusion

Citizenship has varying meanings for Chinese migrant wives and such variation is often a result of their different identities. As the desire, motivation, and process of citizenship acquisition entail paradoxes (Constable 2010), my findings show that gender, class, education, age, generation, and nationality are intertwined in (re)producing power in society. Less affluent Chinese women associate citizenship with its benefits and entitlements. In contrast, the more educated/skilled Chinese women demand that citizenship should also not be differentiated. Educated/skilled Chinese migrant women conceptualize citizenship beyond the practical benefits and instead advocate that they deserve to be treated equally as native Taiwanese citizens, as well as naturalized citizens of other country of origins. Moreover, my data show that affluent migrant women may also view citizenship instrumentally. When the cost of citizenship outweighs the benefits, they reject Taiwanese citizenship. This article, thus, urges the recognition of the range of identities that shape the agencies in conceptualizing and exercising citizenship. The analysis of migrant wives' own conceptualization of citizenship brings feminist scholarship into critical dialogue with citizenship studies scholars by considering the lived experiences of citizenship.

While these intersectional identities may shape how Chinese women negotiate citizenship, they also constrain the amount and type of Chinese wives' agency. The less affluent Chinese women have a few choices but to seek Taiwanese citizenship to utilize the concrete benefits. In contrast, more affluent, educated, and skilled Chinese women may seem to have more choices in their actions; however, they are also constrained by institutional inequalities, as well as their spouses' decisions. Particularly, educated/skilled Chinese women have more cultural capital; yet, they are not able to pursue high-skill professions due to Taiwan's exertion of its sovereignty via migration governance. Additionally, although wealthy women worry less about their career aspirations because of their

financial freedom, they often make decisions regarding citizenship acquisition based on their husbands' plans.

This paper also opens the door for future research. A more profound exploration of the gendered experiences of citizenship that compares the experiences of migrant women and men is needed. Future research should also pay attention to how Chinese migrant husbands conceptualize citizenship. Taiwanese women who marry Chinese immigrants are likely to follow their spouses and reside in China. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the extent to which migrant husbands view Taiwanese citizenship as desirable, particularly if married couples in these instances establish their lives in China. Moreover, even if Chinese migrant husbands settle in Taiwan, they are less likely to participate in organizations that support immigrants because many of these programs offer feminine support, through which they may run baking and sewing workshops, where migrant husbands do not necessarily fit in. Future analysis of how Taiwan's legislations manifest intersectionality also furthers the understanding of migrants' negotiation of citizenship and belonging.

Further research also needs to address how the knowledge of one's citizen status makes a difference for how she is treated. In other words, do native citizens view Chinese marriage migrants differently if they knew they rejected Taiwanese citizenship? Would their loyalty be questioned? Only 20.5% of Chinese spouses in Yeh's (2010) interviews regarding acculturation in Taiwan report that they feel the Taiwanese treat them very well. The social climate distinguishes Chinese women based on the assumption that they are there for resources, betterment, and citizenship. Thus, research on how the hostile division might still be built, with or without citizenship, offers implications for additional ways in which citizenship may be meaningful.

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